

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 16, 2017

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
House Committee on Armed Services
2120 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Committee on Armed Services
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Phil Roe, M.D.
Chairman
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
335 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Timothy Walz
Ranking Member
House Committee on Veterans' Affairs
333 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte
Chairman
The Committee on the Judiciary
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Conyers, Jr.
Ranking Member
The Committee on the Judiciary
2141 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members,

We urge your respective committees to hold hearings or joint hearings to review legislation referred to the House Judiciary Committee, Armed Services Committee, and Veterans Affairs Committee affecting noncitizen service members and veterans. As of January 2017, more than twenty thousand lawful permanent residents and noncitizens serve on active duty and reserve status, while hundreds, perhaps thousands, of veterans who honorably served our country, live in exile of the nation they defended.

More than three hundred of these veterans live just a few miles from the United States in Tijuana, Mexico. On June 3, 2017 and October 5-6, 2017, congressional delegations from the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Veterans' Affairs Committee respectively, visited the Deported Veterans Support House to meet the veterans living there and receive firsthand accounts of the extreme difficulty many of them face on a daily basis and the deep pain they suffer from being forced from their home.

While there is an expedited naturalization process for those who serve, many have not received the assistance they need to complete the process. Some are not made aware a process for naturalization exists at all, some believe their service automatically grants them citizenship, and some have their paperwork mishandled by the military while assuming their citizenship application has been processed correctly. It is the responsibility of the military and the

government to make every noncitizen soldier aware of their rights and to handle their cases quickly and effectively.

For those who do not complete the naturalization process, the constant threat of deportation hangs over them. Many are unaware that being convicted of certain crimes could result in their immediate deportation, many of those crimes being nonviolent in nature. During the congressional delegations to Tijuana, members heard directly from veterans that did not understand how a onetime mistake could have them deported from the only home they have ever known. These deported veterans are strongly patriotic, and many lived in the United States since a very young age. We must do more to honor our commitments to those who have worn the uniform.

This is a complex issue. Our immigration system has been broken for years and we must work together to fix it. A good starting place would be helping service members. Already, legislation has been referred to your respective committees to address this issue:

- House Armed Services, House Veterans' Affairs, and House Judiciary have been referred *The Veterans Visa and Protection Act of 2017* (HR 1405) and *The Repatriate Our Patriots Act* (HR 3429); and
- House Judiciary has been referred *The Restoring Respect for Immigrant Service in Uniform Act* (HR 1470), the *Immigrant Veterans Eligibility Tracking System Act* (HR 2760), *The Healthcare Opportunities for Patriots Act* (HR 2761), *The Veterans' Pathway to Citizenship Act* (HR 3563), and *The Second Chance for Service Act* (HR 3352).

Holding hearings on these bills is the first step in developing a solution to help noncitizen service members and veterans. Thank you for your consideration of our request. We look forward to working together.

Sincerely,



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Michelle Lujan Grisham
Member of Congress



Nanette Diaz Barragan
Member of Congress



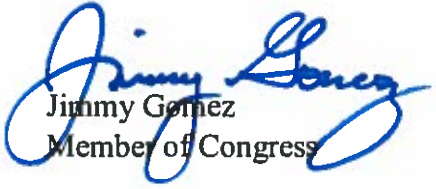
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Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress



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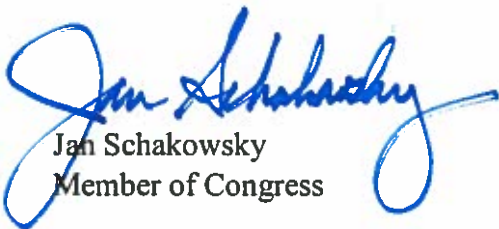
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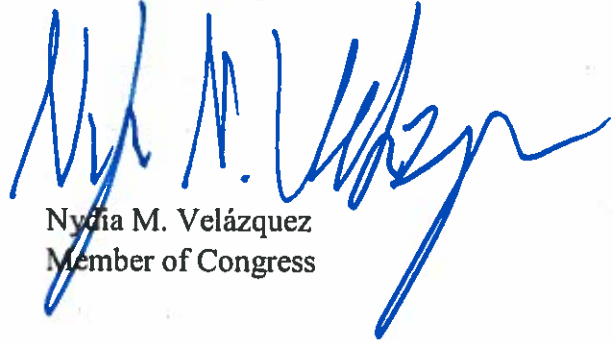
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